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United States Mission to the OSCE

Crackdown on Independent Voices in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 15, 2016

On November 3, we noted that we were troubled by the decision of an Azerbaijani court to sentence N!DA activist Giyas Ibrahimov to ten years in prison on charges of drug possession that are widely considered to be politically motivated. On December 8, N!DA activist Bayram Mammadov was sentenced to ten years in prison on similar charges. We are concerned by the sentencing of both individuals, and by allegations of ill-treatment during their detention.

We urge the Azerbaijani government to release Mr. Mammadov and Mr. Ibrahimov, as well as all other individuals who have been incarcerated for exercising their fundamental freedoms. We also urge the government of Azerbaijan to remove the travel ban on journalist Khadija Ismailova, which the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan upheld on December 8, and to drop the remaining charges against her.

The United States again urges the Azerbaijani government to abide by its OSCE and other international commitments. We further urge the government to release all those imprisoned for exercising their fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly, which are vital to a healthy, democratic society.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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